



Randy_Merchant@doh
.state.fl.us

09/04/2003 09:42 AM

To: Ben Moore/R4/USEPA/US@EPA, jos3@cdc.gov, rxe5@cdc.gov,
rig4@cdc.gov, keo1@cdc.gov, swm1@cdc.gov, Brad
Jackson/R4/USEPA/US@EPA, Jim McGuire/R4/USEPA/US@EPA

cc:
Subject: FW: Wells tested for pollution near Coronet plant

Please see the last three paragraphs. Ben, please pass along to EPA. Thanks, Randy

-----Original Message-----

From: One of the Grimms [mailto:Grimmie@toast.net]

Sent: Thursday, September 04, 2003 7:53 AM

To: Eric; Dr. David Johnson; Joe Sekerke; Alan Becker; Josefa Schlottmann; Prakash Patel;
Bob Safay; Beth Copeland; Connie Garrett; Randy Merchant; Shaun Crawford; Susan Bland;
Sharon Ketchen; Nancy Malaret; Cicely Brown; Andy Reich

Subject: Wells tested for pollution near Coronet plant

Note: for related video, go to:

http://www.sptimes.com/2003/09/04/Hillsborough/Wells_tested_for_poll.shtml

Wells tested for pollution near Coronet plant

By RON MATUS, Times Staff Writer
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PLANT CITY - Authorities began a second round of well tests Wednesday near Coronet Industries, combing for clues about what many residents believe is a massive environmental crime.

Investigators are looking for evidence of pollutants, specifically in the groundwater near the Coronet site. In coming weeks, they will take samples of air and soil in the area to check for contamination.

They'll also be taking hits from civil rights groups that raised questions Wednesday about the investigation's integrity.

The tests that began Wednesday include 50 wells within a quarter-mile of the phosphate plant. Results are expected in two weeks.

Health officials "want to make sure wells are safe to drink," said the health department's Greg Rottler.

The water will be tested for metals, fluoride, boron and pollutants associated with oil and gasoline - all potential toxins found on the Coronet site.

Because the investigation is focused on Coronet, the wells will not be tested for pesticides, Rottler said, even though surrounding land is dotted with strawberry farms and orange groves.

Federal officials ordered the pollution probe in June, in the wake of a nine-page report by state authorities that repeated residents' fears about cancer and other illnesses in two communities, Springhead and the predominantly black neighborhood of Lincoln Park. A battery of health and



environmental agencies is now focused on Coronet, a company with a spotty environmental record, and two closed municipal landfills northwest of the plant. A final report is expected next summer.

Health officials say there is no evidence of increased cancer rates, or proof that harmful amounts of pollution are blowing or seeping into residential areas. But faced with widespread anxiety, they won't give definitive answers without more data.

Two civil rights groups say any results will be suspect.

In a conference call with federal officials Wednesday, they accused state and local agencies of being too cozy with the phosphate industry and asked the Environmental Protection Agency to assume control of the investigation.

"This has been an egregious facility for a long time, and (state and local officials) haven't done anything," said Connie Tucker, director of the Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice in Atlanta.